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Our Universities: I'm Ashamed?

Universities, inadvertently hopefully, may be training generations to not accept responsibility for their actions. This is shameful. Such training breeds an expectation of entitlement that undermines initiative, industry, courage, self reliance, sense of community, and the essence of an education: Enlightened action.

Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"We should be ashamed," Lloyd Thacker, executive director of the Education Conservancy, told a roomful of college counselors and admissions staff on Wednesday, October 26, 2011, according to a New York Times Piece ***Discontent over the State of College Admissions*** posted by Rebecca R. Ruiz October 27, 2011. Thacker and Jerome A. Lucido, executive director of the University of Southern California Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice talked about admissions practices at universities. And they were ashamed.

The thrust of the meeting was about the overemphasis on merit based aid for students. Over emphasis on excellence. I couldn't sleep last night and I laid awake thinking, "Our universities are placing too much emphasis on quality".

Baloney.

I am ashamed too. The subject being taught at our nations universities with the greatest success, and with deleterious short and long term social impact, is how to avoid personal responsibility.

Students go to class, having paid sometimes inexcusably high tuition and fees, and put forth an inexcusable lack luster effort and expect an "A". We, our university community, bends to the pressure of the argument that the student worked hard, they stayed up all night, and they paid the tuition and fees and therefore deserve, or are entitled to, an "A". I'm ashamed.

Where is the personal responsibility for the student to attain a grade based on the quality of the work they produce, the tests they take, the papers they write? When the university succumbs to the pleas of student and parent alike we have taught them well that there is no risk and no personal responsibility. I'm ashamed.

When student and family sign up for an education loan, quite possibly for too much for too little, but have partaken of the Kool-Aid dispensed by our universities and elected officials that say you must have a university education. I'm ashamed. The loan comes

due, you know, the one signed by the student and family, and elected leadership says let's forgive the loan, or a portion thereof, because it is too great a burden to bear, we have taught well, no risk and no responsibility. I'm ashamed.

When a university admits students for study who have shown no proclivity for learning, caused by a poor home life, a weak high school, peer pressure, too much internet and enough notebook, the kind with paper or the equivalent thereof, the wrong friends, a bad neighborhood, the kind of the father or mother that raised them: we accept them, we co-sign for loans by saying that they too can succeed, when there is not a shred of evidence that is the case, the university by its action has taught a lesson well assume no individual responsibility. I am ashamed.

Actions by leadership in all quarters to create soft landings for poor decisions that divorce reality from performance in both students and universities that remind any thoughtful onlooker of the housing crisis, poorly collateralized, undeserved, unearned loans, we are in very deep water. The market will respond - like a glacier - and people will stop borrowing money to buy degrees in areas with low utility as defined by the student, organizations will right themselves or die. We have taught well, they accept no responsibility. I am ashamed.

Students who graduate from universities become the next generation of leadership for commerce, governments, places of worship, universities, and nations around the world. The bubble that universities have lived in since WWII has made listless institutions, unaffected and unshaped by the legitimate and relentless pressures of the marketplace. I am ashamed.

We have quietly, deliberately created an environment where responsibility or action always lies elsewhere, never on our doorstep. I am ashamed.

We are afraid to teach morality and personal responsibility, creating in over a half century, a class of leadership through entitlement that will have long term effect on society that will not prove useful in solving the complex problems that societies face.

We are teaching a second or third generation of graduates who are unwilling to be accountable for themselves, but will always find someone - usually a greedy person, or something - usually a heartless, cold blooded organization, to charge with accountability that is rightfully personal.

I'm really ashamed. Thacker barely scratched the surface.

